

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7454

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC HDQS HI

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 2841

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR BM XC

SUBJECT: GUB DECLARES TIME RIPE FOR CLOSER REGIONAL COOPERATION

REF: A. RANGOON 2568 B. RANGOON'S A-156, NOVEMBER 30, 1973

SUMMARY. RECENT RANGOON NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS COMMENT ON NEED FOR SE ASIAN REGIONAL COOPERATION AND EXISTENCE NOW OF MORE FAVORABLE CONDITIONS FOR COOPERATION. EDITORIALS DOUBTLESS REFLECT POLITICAL REPORT APPROVED AT BSPP OCTOBER CONGRESS, WHICH CONCLUDED TIME HAS COME FOR SE ASIAN CONSULTATIONS ON PERPETUATING PEACE IN REGION. COMING MONTHS LIKELY TO SEE INTENSIFIED GUB EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN REGIONAL TIES, FALLING SHORT, HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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OF SEEKING ASEAN MEMBERSHIP. END SUMMARY.

1. RECENT NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS AND POLITICAL REPORT FROM BSPP SECOND PARTY CONGRESS INDICATE INCREASED GUB INTEREST IN REGIONAL COOPERATION.

2. NOVEMBER 28 GUARDIAN EDITORIAL NOTED THAT "REGIONAL COOPERATION . . . MUST RECEIVE TOP PRIORITY."

3. WORKING PEOPLE'S DAILY FOLLOWING DAY DEVOTED ENTIRE EDITORIAL TO REGIONAL COOPERATION, MAKING FOLLOWING POINTS:

A) THERE IS TALK OF SETTING UP ASIAN COMMON MARKET, IN WHICH SOME OR ALL NATIONS OF REGION (INCLUDING BURMA) MAY PARTICIPATE.

B) WHILE TWO VIETNAMS STILL UNABLE TO PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO REGIONALISM, OTHER COUNTRIES IN REGION ARE IN BETTER POSITION TO GO AHEAD WITH INCREASING BILATERAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION.

C) REGIONALISM CURRENTLY IN VOGUE BECAUSE OF "DIRE NECESSITY FOR COOPERATION ON THE PART OF NATIONS WHICH FIND ISOLATIONISM INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT AND EVEN IMPOSSIBLE." INCREASING CO-OPERATION NECESSARY FOR LDCS TO IMPROVE TERMS OF TRADE, AND REGIONAL COOPERATION SHOULD BE PROMOTED IN "ALL POSSIBLE SPHERES."

D) ASIA TODAY POSSESSES MORE FAVORABLE CONDITIONS THAN BEFORE FOR COOPERATION, SINCE "WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ONE OR TWO NATIONS" THE COUNTRIES OF REGION SHOW GREATER INDEPENDENCE AND AWARENESS OF NEED TO COMPLEMENT NATIONAL SELF-RELIANCE WITH REGIONAL CO-OPERATION.

4. COMMENT: A. THESE EDITORIALS DOUBTLESS REFLECT THE POLITICAL REPORT ADOPTED BY OCTOBER BSPP CONGRESS. ACCORDING TO SUMMARY WHICH EMBASSY OBTAINED, REPORT RECALLED CHAIRMAN NE WIN'S COMMENT DURING JUNE VISIT TO INDONESIA THAT "WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES FAVORABLE" SEA NATIONS SHOULD CONFER ON HOW TO ACHIEVE REGIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY. REPORT CONCLUDED THAT "NOW IS THE TIME" FOR SEA NATIONS TO CONSULT WITH AIM OF COLLECTIVELY PERPETUATING REGIONAL PEACE. IN APPARENT REFERENCE TO MALAYSIA'S NETURALIZATION SCHEME, HOWEVER, REPORT NOTED THAT IDEA OF SEA NEUTRAL ZONE MEANINGLESS AS LONG AS ANY NATION IN ZONE PERMITS STATIONING OF FOREIGN TROOPS.

B. EDITORIALS AND POLITICAL REPORT INDICATE THAT GUB NOW CONSIDERS TIME RIPE FOR SE ASIAN REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS, BUT GUB POLICY ON REGIONALISM STILL SOMEWHAT INCHOATE, AND IT IS UNCONFIDENTIAL

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CLEAR WHAT TYPE OF CONFERENCE OR CONSULTATION GUB WOULD FAVOR. IT IS LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT IN COMING MONTHS GUB WILL STEP UP EFFORTS TO DEVELOP CLOSER TIES WITH SE ASIAN NEIGHBORS. WHILE GREATER PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL PROJECTS MAY DEVELOP, GUB ACTIVITIES WILL DOUBTLESS FALL SHORT OF SEEKING MEMBERSHIP IN ASEAN, WHICH GUB STILL REGARDS AS TOO WESTERN-ORIENTED.

C. POLITICAL REPORT AND WORKING PEOPLES DAILY EDITORIAL MUCH

MORE VAGUE CONCERNING REGIONAL COOPERATION WITH AREAS OF ASIA OUTSIDE SOUTHEAST ASIA--WHICH FOR BURMA MEANS PRIMARILY NATIONS OF INDIAN SUBCONTINENT. NEVERTHELESS, EDITORIAL SPECIFICALLY CITES PAKISTAN, INDIA, NEPAL, SRI LANKA, AND BANGLADESH IN ITS HESITANT REFERENCE TO ASIAN COMMON MARKET, AND REFERENCES IN BOTH STATEMENTS TO IMPROVED CONDITIONS FOR COOPERATION IN ASIA AS A WHOLE ALSO SUGGEST INCREASED GUB INTEREST IN COOPERATION WITH SOUTH ASIA. ALTHOUGH SUCH COOPERATION APPEARS TO BE SECONDARY TO SE ASIAN REGIONALISM IN GUB EYES, THESE VAGUE FEELERS ARE OF INTEREST IN LIGHT OF REF B, IN WHICH EMBASSY DETECTED SIGNS OF INCIPIENT REGIONALISM INVOLVING BURMA AND NATIONS OF SUBCONTINENT. LACEY

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